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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 NEW DELHI 003252

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TAGS: [PREL](#) [EAID](#) [IN](#) [IZ](#) [UNSC](#)

SUBJECT: KOFI ANNAN BURSTS INDIA'S UNSC VETO BUBBLE

REF: A. NEW DELHI 3087

[1](#)B. NEW DELHI 302

Classified By: Charge Robert Blake. Reasons 1.4 (B, D)

[1](#)1. (C) Summary: UN Secretary General Kofi Annan's April 26-28 visit to New Delhi began on a positive note as Annan and the GOI made amends for the GOI's refusal to allow the Secretary General to tour tsunami affected areas in southern

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India in January, but it ended with a bubble-bursting bang when Annan very clearly said that new UNSC members could not expect to have veto power. Annan's reality check set off introspection among New Delhi foreign policy watchers who now argue that India should put less effort into its "obsession" with the UNSC and more into being a global leader. The GOI publicly offered constitution-drafting assistance through the UN to the new Iraqi government, suggesting that New Delhi is making a preliminary, albeit belated, gesture towards re-engaging on Iraq reconstruction. Annan also urged India to sign the CTBT and join negotiations on the FMCT. End Summary.

The Patch

[1](#)2. (SBU) With no apparent lingering effects of the GOI's tsunami "snub," New Delhi rolled out the red carpet for Annan

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who met with the Prime Minister, the Foreign Minister, President Kalam, UPA Chairperson Sonia Gandhi, and Leader of the Opposition LK Advani, and attended a roundtable on HIV/AIDS. Although the MEA had stated on January 11 that it had no specific request from Annan to visit affected areas in India, the GOI reportedly had denied the Secretary General's request to include India in his tsunami tour (ref B). Annan did not visit any tsunami reconstruction sites in India during this trip.

The Pitch

[1](#)3. (SBU) Undeterred by its inconclusive lobbying effort with Chinese Premier Wen (ref A), New Delhi continued its UNSC campaign with the Secretary General. In his lunchtime toast, Foreign Minister Natwar Singh restated India's case, declaring that "the architecture of the UN has remained frozen in time," and that developing countries needed to be allowed to "decisively influence the global agenda in all its aspects." Indeed, the MEA spokesperson announced on April 27 that the GOI focus during Annan's visit was to "reiterate India's claim to the Security Council," and to inform the Secretary General of India's efforts to that end. Congress

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spokesman Anand Sharma told PolCouns in the midst of the visit that India would underline its insistence on a UNSC seat including the veto. Anything less, Sharma said, would be unacceptable to the Indian people and politically untenable following the Parliamentary debate where the government affirmed its quest for membership including a veto.

The Pinch

[1](#)4. (U) On April 28, Annan delivered a lecture "In Larger Freedom: the Changing Role of the UN," which echoed many Indian arguments for UNSC membership, including selection based on contribution to peacekeeping and diplomatic efforts.

But the Secretary General also squashed the GOI's veto hopes. Responding to a question about the utility of an expanded Security Council without the veto, Annan urged the audience not to be so focused on that detail, adding that an enlarged Council even without the veto would be a "step forward." Later, at a press conference, asked if countries that are bidding for a permanent seat can expect veto power as well, the Secretary General answered, "no, the new permanent members are not designed to have a veto." He added that it would be "utopian" to expect the P-5 to dilute their current rights. During his remarks Annan also expressed the hope that India would soon sign the CTBT and join the FMCT negotiations (which also ruffled some Indian feathers).

Back to Reality

15. (U) New Delhi-based policy watchers are increasingly calling for the GOI to "get real" on India's UNSC prospects. Following Annan's April 28 speech, an "Indian Express" editorial observed that India should accept membership, even without parity to the P-5, as a "first step." An op-ed in the "Hindu" urged New Delhi to not "tilt at windmills," and to consider how unlikely it is that UN member states will favor expanding the "profoundly undemocratic" veto. Even before Annan injected his dose of reality into India's campaign, prominent strategist C. Raja Mohan on April 26 asserted that India's "obsession" with the UNSC was detracting from the more relevant deficiency in New Delhi's foreign policy: insufficient international power. Arguing that "in its obsession with Security Council membership, India has contributed little to the new debates in the UN on the great global issues," Mohan warned that there are "no short cuts to great power status."

Iraq Offer

16. (U) Although the veto issue soon overtook it, on April 27, the Foreign Minister responded to Annan's remarks on continuing UN engagement in Iraq with a public offer of Indian support for the "revival of the political process" there. According to the MEA, Singh offered Indian expertise for the drafting of the Iraqi constitution, and committed to providing a list of Indians who could be involved. We will encourage the Iraqi embassy here to follow up on this offer.

Comment

17. (C) With India's UNSC agenda -- and the considerable domestic focus on this issue -- increasingly at odds with the political realities, there is no indication of how the GOI plans to regroup. The UNSC aside, Annan's remarks brought into focus the need for greater Indian action and involvement on global issues to back up their "rising global power" argument. The GOI's public offer of assistance through the UN to the new Iraqi government was significant as a preliminary, albeit belated, gesture towards playing a part in addressing global challenges. The upcoming visit to New Delhi of Ambassador Shirin Tahir-Kheli will provide an important opportunity to reinforce this argument about the need for India to continue stepping away from the GOI's comfort zone as the GOI seeks to prove its readiness for a permanent place on the Security Council.

18. (U) Minimize considered.

BLAKE